1: Ammar E, I-5 (1951) 1954
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Silwa

Mawlid Salma (Prophet's Life-story).

These books are usually obtained from an itinerary vendor, who occasionally visits the village. Amongst those who own books, three persons actually possess the bulk of the books found in the village: they are the Sheikh of the recognized 'Kuttab', a village school teacher, and an ambitious young man who owns a shop in the village at present, after having spent more than ten years in Cairo and Alexandria. Yet perhaps none of these people possess more than a dozen books.

As to the spread of the newspapers, there are ten persons in this community of over three thousand people who buy newspapers, although not regularly. They get them from a distributor travelling by local train. Three of the newspaper buyers are shopkeepers, while two others are teachers in the compulsory school. News naturally infiltrates to a large extent through reading aloud the news in the village gatherings, or through borrowing the newspapers. Up to 1951 there was no radio set in the village and, of course, no cinema, thus contact with the outside world, as far as these aids are concerned, was entirely absent.

The extent of literacy in this community could also be expressed in the number of people who have been to any school other than those educational institutions existing in the village (before the establishment of the primary school in the village). The following is a list enumerating all the boys and men who are receiving some kind of education outside the village:[1]

Nine boys in the primary school in Aswan (under 12 years old).

One boy in the secondary school in Aswan (14 years old).

Six boys in the Training College for Elementary Teachers in Aswan.

Two elementary school teachers who are actually teaching in the village compulsory school.

One higher education.

In analysing these educated people from the village, it is important to show the various incentives for their education. Four of those in the primary school and the elementary training college are cousins: the father of two of them is an Azharite and a teacher at the village school, and it is not surprising that he should send his two sons to school in Aswan. Two years ago, however, his younger brother quarrelled with him, and decided to vie with him at every turn, even in sending two of his sons to the same schools as those of his brother. Two of the other boys are sons of a relatively well-off woman who forced her husband to divorce her. She then married a younger man, and managed to keep her two sons under her custody by sending them to school and personally bearing the expenses incurred by their education in Aswan, as the father himself could not do so. One of the boys in the primary school in Aswan is the son of a blind man who possesses practically no land and on receiving aid (£E2 a month) for his disability from the Ministry of Endowment, decided to send his son to school.

[1] There are no village girls at all who have received or are receiving education outside the village compulsory school.

The Ministry of Public Works controls the irrigation of 656
all cultivated land, settles the rotation of crops for each zone, watches over the embankments and canals, and, if the Nile threatens to break its banks, recruits the fellaheen necessary for their maintenance.

The Ministry of Agriculture regulates the acreage of cotton and rice, distributes and controls the selection of cotton seed, and levies the fellaheen needed to fight the boll worm or the locust.

The Ministry of Finance collects the land-tax through 651
its *sarrafs* in each district, issues orders for seizures, buys 656
cotton to maintain equilibrium in the home market, and 657
by means of the *Crédit Agricole* attempts to systematise the finances of the fellah.

The Ministries of Education and Public Health oblige 871
the fellah to improve his mind and his physique.

The Ministry of Justice, through the district courts, 692
— and after agelong delays — condemns or acquits him.

The Ministry of National Defence arranges for his en- 702
interest, or collects the exemption fine.

The Ministry of the Interior, acting in the common 656
interest, supports all this network of regulations and so ensures order and public security.

The Government system in its present form is less than 175
a century old. It was established by Mohammed Aly, 64
and has changed little in its working since. He did not so much create the machinery which deals with the fellah as systematise it after the disastrous and arbitrary rule of the Turks and Mamelukes. The founder of the reigning House thus raised over the heads of the fellaheen a system of law and order which makes it possible for them, if not to progress, at least to live.

Let us examine this hierarchy from top to bottom, and consider the relations of each authority with the fellah.

First of all comes the King. The last two sovereigns 643
(not to mention others) have sincerely desired the well-being 645
of the fellah, and frequently given proof of this desire. Their Ministers, however, are often more occupied with politics than with government, and travel far more in Europe than in the

material is used, that is to say the nearest available earth. Thus large holes have been created, which have been dug deeper and wider, and have then filled up with water. These are the *birkas* or village ponds, which serve as drinking-troughs for animals, as swimming-pools for children, and sometimes as sources of water for the housewife.

The Government has had fifty-odd of these hotbeds of disease filled in, not without meeting opposition from the fellaheen, whose habits and customs have thus been disturbed. Eighteen such ponds needed 10,000 cubic metres of earth.

Not far from the *birka*, still outside the village, is the *gurn*, or winnowing and threshing-floor. This is a flat patch of ground covered with cow-dung and earth, which has been levelled and trodden down. Its size is proportionate to the number of families that use it. The *gurn* is common property, and nobody can appropriate it. It is big enough for ten groups to work at a time, until all have winnowed their corn. It also serves as a public square for meetings, though often an adjacent piece of waste ground supplements it for this purpose. Not far away can be seen a great rubbish heap made of dirt, dung and carrion. This heap would overtop the houses, if the dogs and birds of prey did not come regularly to reduce it, and if the fellaheen did not take manure from it. It would be an even greater danger to public health than the *birka*, if the sun did not disinfect it.

Still outside the village, particularly in the Fayum and in Middle Egypt, there may be square towers, as much as thirty feet high, banded in black and white. Their heavy base, seven yards by four, gives them the appearance of forts, but they are in fact pigeon-cotes. You can see them assailed, at sunset, each by a cloud of from fifteen to twenty thousand pigeons coming back to roost after feeding among the fields. The construction of these "houses", requiring an outlay of from L.E. 200 to L.E. 300 each, is a specialised trade. It is beyond the means of our fellaheen, and can be undertaken only by an *omda* or big landowner. In the South a pigeon-cote is often built on a corner of the rooftop, thus raising the skyline of the village; but as a rule these houses with pigeon-cotes, whether built-on or independent, do not form part of the village itself. They stand apart, and can be distinguished by their extra storey, their more pretentious appearance, and their gardens. Such are the owner's villa on an *ezba*, or

compulsory, met with little success, and had to be suppressed after the last war.

In 1902, after a trial by the National Bank, the Agricultural Bank of Egypt was founded, with the object of providing loans to small farmers at the legal rate of 9%. It opened agencies in all the principal townships, and enjoyed the privilege of being repaid before the taxes. At first it was a success. But the formalities were too complicated, the agencies too far from borrowers in the small villages, the date of repayment too rigidly insisted on, and the whole transaction too public. The fellah preferred to fall back on his moneylender, who was on the spot.

The success of the Agricultural Bank might indeed have been greater if the application of the Five-Feddan Law, by making mortgages impossible, had not dealt it a fatal blow. From the date of this Act the bank abandoned its earlier policy, and in 1930 it went into liquidation.

The system was revived in an improved form in 1931, with the creation of the *Crédit Agricole d'Egypte*, founded by the Government with the co-operation of the big Cairo anks. To assist its operations the Government agreed to advance a million pounds and suspended the Five-Feddan Law in its favour.

The new institution gives advances to small-holders at 7% and to co-operative societies at 5% up to the amounts required for cultivation and harvesting, for the purchase of cattle, and for the improvement of land. It sells selected seeds and manures on credit to small tenant farmers and share-croppers, and advances them up to 80 % of the value of their crops, if these are deposited in the bank's *shoonas*, scattered all over the country. Understanding the fellah mentality, and profiting by the experience of the Agricultural Bank, it has decentralised its operations, leaving fairly wide powers of discretion to its agents, who go into the villages and reduce formalities to a minimum. It has thus won the confidence of the fellaheen and drawn many of them out of the clutches of the moneylenders, without itself suffering in any way from its own creditors. Nevertheless, it is already tending more and more to help the middle and larger landowners.

The reader will have noted the special conditions granted by the *Crédit Agricole* to co-operative societies. These have

474 existed in Egypt for the last twenty years. The Government recognised them officially by the Law of 1923 (amended in 1927). It made advances to encourage their development and enable them to buy seed, manure, cattle, and implements, on better terms. Since 1931 it has entrusted this task to the *Crédit Agricole*. The change was successful. The number of societies grew from 147 in 1927 to 703 in 1935, and the number of co-operators rose from 12,298 to 71,000. In 1935 L.E. 836,000 was borrowed from the *Crédit Agricole* by 544 of these societies, the others being financed by private capital.

The advantages of these societies are evident. They do away with shady middlemen, systematise production and prices, improve both quality and quantity, and buy and sell at the best conditions (*). They have a clearly-defined aim of social service. "The various types of co-operative societies, put aside part of their profit every year to be spent in the various social services, village reform, education, hygiene" and so on.

It is in Lower Egypt, and especially Beheira, that these organisations have spread most. In spite of their success they leave untouched the vast majority of the fellaheen, especially those whose need is greatest and among whom the co-operative spirit is least developed.

656 The Government has passed a number of measures for the protection of these grown-up children :

[426] (1) The law against moneylenders (1896) by which the usurer, who goes too far, is made liable to a heavy fine.

[659] (2) The establishment of *halâka* cotton markets (1912) in which weights are checked and sales governed by current prices at the Bourse.

[651] (3) The suppression of the tax on date-palms (1920).

(4) The suppression of the *ghafîr* tax, a watchman's toll which the fellaheen had to pay (1936).

744 657 If the fellah's economic activity needs to be organised and controlled by the paternal providence of the State, how much more do his health and his housing ! But here planning is far ahead of achievement. The question is whether to begin by providing all villages with drinking-water, or first to build model villages whenever possible.

weekly fair, stores for wood, manure, and grain, and a fire station. Twenty thousand people are to live in this paradise, which will cover 45 feddans. The plan has not yet been carried out (74).

A single model village in the middle of a vast area is a drop in the ocean. Few people can either benefit by it or copy it. It would be better to spend the money on more useful projects such as supplying the villages with drinking-water. The benefit would be more wide-spread, say the advocates of this policy, and avoid the injustice of creating inequalities among villages. Why should one be chosen for a model, and others remain in their old squalor? A five-year plan was suggested for rebuilding the four thousand villages of Egypt at an estimated cost of thirty million pounds. This sum appears both moderate and feasible, when it is remembered that the Egyptian Government has spent forty-five millions on dams and irrigation work. The plan was given up, however, on account of the heavy expenses incurred under the Treaty of 1936, and perhaps also owing to the lack of public spirit (75).

The Commission set up for the reform of the medieval system of *'omdas* and for the betterment of conditions in the countryside has proposed the establishment of municipal councils in which the fellaheen should take part. There are already such bodies in existence in about sixty townships. They are composed of the Mudîr or the Mâmûr, the Inspector of Public Health, four elected members, and others nominated by the Ministry of the Interior.

Another institution, as yet not much developed, is that of the Village Councils, which were begun in 1918 and now operate in about seventy places. Their composition is similar, but their financial scope is very narrow. These bodies are limited in their activities to the watering of the principal streets (which does not do away with the mud), the construction of small public gardens (in which nobody may walk, for fear of spoiling them), and the erection of a few street lights. They might well be more representative of the village. Even if the *'omda*, instead of being nominated, were elected by his fellow-villagers, would that give him civic ideals? Specialised officials might be appointed to the village, such as a doctor, a visiting nurse, an agricultural expert, and a trained social worker. Or should the first aim be